

**Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw**  
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In less than two weeks, the winter of 2011-12 will officially come to an end, although it will more likely be remembered as the winter that never was. Several months ago, as snow plows rumbled through the streets in October, most of us envisioned a repeat of the 2010-11 seasons, however, we were spared. The New England weather can certainly be a topic of intense conversation but the weather forecasters this year seem to be a bit bored. The milder temperatures, lack of snow and a frost-free ground have construction crews eager to get started and soon you'll notice a flurry of activity around the community. So I thought I'd get an early start on spring with a few construction zone safety tips.

Motorists driving about roadways within the City of Amesbury are accustomed to the presence of orange barrels, detour signs and heavy equipment. In fact, over the past few years, many water lines, gas mains, power grids and roadways have been rebuilt. The combination of failing structures and grant money has made the projects necessary and possible. Although some may argue over the cost and time needed to make these repairs, there's no easy way to deal with systems that are decades old.

When it comes to safety in a construction zone, everyone involved with the project wants to assure the public is safe. Many companies actually employ safety officials to monitor the site and training for employees is mandatory. Recently, all Amesbury Police Officers were given a refresher course on construction site safety, courtesy of the Town's Insurance provider. The construction crew is actually in charge of safety, in and around the work zone, but police officers are used to direct traffic through the area. It may seem frustrating to encounter several work zones in the same day but most projects are actually independent of each other.

The biggest safety tip to remember when driving or walking through a construction zone is to slow down. Too often it seems as though the thought process of a motorist is; "if there is something in the road, speed up to get around it." This creates a very dangerous situation, for everyone involved. As you pass through a work zone, you may need to stop suddenly for a piece of equipment, some debris or a worker who may be in the roadway. Quite often, you may need to change lanes or squeeze to the right in order to pass. Driving through at a slow speed allows a motorist to do so safely.

Motorists should also watch for the police officer's signal; either to pass through or stop. He or she may also motion for you to slow down or call your attention to a hazard by pointing. If you are unsure of what to do, stop and wait for instructions. You may also be motioned to pass through a traffic signal, so stay alert to the officer. You may also need to take a detour at times, so stay alert to posted signs. Construction crews try to avoid using detours if possible because it creates an inconvenience for them as well as motorists. Bicyclists, joggers and pedestrians should also watch for instructions and be alert for equipment in the roadway. Officers must also monitor the equipment, workers and other vehicles so be patient. The officer may also be aware of something you are not, such as an approaching emergency vehicle, so don't go until it's clear.

As of press time, a number of projects have been planned or started, so it's going to be a constructive year in Amesbury. Not to date myself, but this will be the 29<sup>th</sup> year I've been directing traffic through work zones, so I can honestly say I've worked on just about every street in town by now. As in the past, with a little patience and effort, we'll navigate through the cones and barrels to get where we're going in one piece. As the season gets rolling, I'll try to include some information concerning the streets affected, so you can be prepared to go through them or avoid them altogether.